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TAGS: SOPN, CT, FR

SUBJECT: WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE

THE MARCH 11 WASHINGTON POST CARRIED THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE:

BY RONALD KOVEN, WASHINGTON POST FOREIGN SERVICE EDITOR

GISCARD DEFENDS RECEIPTS OF BOKASSA'S DIAMONDS. QUOTE.

PARIS, MARCH 12- FRENCH PRESIDENT VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING

TONIGHT DELIVERED HIS FIRST DETAILED DEFENSE AGAINST

ACCUSATIONS THAT HE RECEIVED LARGE GIFTS OF DIAMONDS FROM

DEPOSED CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPEROR JFAN-PELLE BOKASSA

IN A TELEVISED DEFENSE CAMPAIGN APPEARANCE WITH A PANEL

OF JOURNALISTS, GISCARD ADMITTED RECEIVING THE GEMS. AS HE

HAS IMPLICITLY DONE BEFORE. BUT, HE SAID, ALL THAT HE TOOK

FROM BOKASSA WERE GIFTS OF IVORY AND DIAMONDS THAT DID NOT

EXCEED THE AVERAGE VALUE OF PRESENTS THAT THE FORMER EM-

PEROR USED TO GIVE TO ANY VISITING CHIEF OF STATE AS SAMPLES

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OF THE PRODUCTION OF HIS NATIONAL DIAMOND-CUTTING AND IVORY
POLISHING FACILITIES.

AS SOON AS BOKASSA WAS OVERTHROWN IN SEPTEMBER 1979, GISCARD

SAID, THE DIAMONDS THE FRENCH PRESIDENT RECEIVED WERE SOLD

FOR THE BENEFIT OF CENTRAL AFRICAN CHARITIES, NOTABLY FOR

THE FORMER FRENCH COLONY'S RED CROSS.

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST HIM ON THE SUBJECT, GISCARD SAID,

WAS "BASE AND COWARDLY." HE SAID HIS DETRACTORS HAD

RELIED ON DOCUMENTS AND RUMORS SPREAD BY "POOR DEVILS"

IN THE SERVICE OF A DEPOSED CHIEF OF STATE THIRSTING FOR
REVENGE.

GISCARD SAID HE WOULD HAVE ANSWERED QUESTIONS ABOUT

IT SOONER IF HE HAD BEEN ASKED ABOUT IT THE SAME WAY HE

WAS TONIGHT. HIS QUESTIONER WAS EXTREMELY APOLOGETIC

RECALLED THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD SAID HE WOULD DEAL WITH

THE MATTER WHEN THE TIME CAME. IS THIS THE MOMENT THE

QUESTIONER ASKED.

THE LAST TIME A JOURNALIST REFERRED TO IT, EVEN LESS

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REVIEWED BY

RLS

DATE

10/25/82

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DIRECTLY, GISCARD GOT OBVIOUSLY ANGRY. SAID, "I LET YOUR
PARDON," AND CHANGED THE SUBJECT. THE PRESIDENT DEALT WITH ANOTHER ISSUE
THAT HAS BEEN HURTING HIS CHANCES--THE PROSPECT THAT IF
HE IS REELECTED TO A SECOND SEVEN-YEAR TERM, THAT WOULD
MAKE A TOTAL OF 14 YEARS IN POWER. IF REELECTED, GISCARD
SAID, HE WOULD NOT RUN FOR A THIRD SEVEN YEARS.

HE SAID HE ACTUALLY FAVORS AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION TO
REDUCE THE TERM BY A YEAR AND TO MAKE IT RENEWABLE ONLY

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ONCE FOR A TOTAL OF 12 YEARS. BUT HE DID NOT INDICATE THAT
HE THOUGHT THAT SHOULD APPLY TO HIM.

TURNING TO THE ACCUSATION THAT HE HAS BEEN A MONARCHICAL
PRESIDENT, HE NOTED THAT MONARCHY IS INHERITED. FINALLY
THE SITUATION OF A MAN RUNNING FOR REELECTION. AS FOR
ROYAL PROTOCOL IN THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE, HE SAID HE
HAD MERELY CONTINUED PREVIOUS PRACTICES.

THOSE WHO MAKE THE ACCUSATION THAT HE ACTS LIKE AN UN-
CROWNED MONARCH, HE SAID, WANT A WEAK PRESIDENT

"THOSE WHO WANT A WEAK POWER IN FRANCE SHOULD NOT VOTE
FOR ME," HE SAID.

BUT THE ISSUE OF THE DIAMONDS AND GISCARD'S COMPLICATED
RELATIONSHIP WITH BOKASSA IS NOT GOING AWAY THAT SIMPLY.
WRITER ROGER DELPEY, UNDOUBTEDLY THE PRINCIPAL "POOR
DEVIL" GISCARD HAD IN MIND, REVEALED TODAY THAT A PART-
ICULARLY CONVINCING DEATH THREAT IS HOLDING UP, PERHAPS
FOR GOOD, PUBLICATION OF A POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE SET OF
DOCUMENTS PURPORTING TO SHOW THE TRUE NATURE OF THE
GISCARD-BOKASSA TIES.

DELPEY HAD BEEN WORKING FOR MORE THAN A YEAR ON WRITING
BOKASSA'S SIDE OF THE STORY IN THE FACE OF INTENSIVE
HARASSMENT THAT HAS INCLUDED A STRETCH IN JAIL ON
QUESTIONABLE CHARGES.

THE LATEST OBSTACLE PLACED IN HIS PATH, DELPEY SAID TODAY,
WAS A TYPEWRITTEN DEATH THREAT DELIVERED FEBRUARY 11

AGAINST A SWISS MAN AND HIS FAMILY WHOM THE WRITER WAS
COUNTING ON TO DELIVER THE PORTION OF HIS BOOK THAT
COULD HURT GISCARD'S REELECTION CHANCES MOST--A SHEAF OF
137 DOCUMENTS THAT WERE GIVEN TO DELPEY BY BOKASSA AND
PLACED IN SAFEKEEPING WITH THE SWISS MAN IN A SECRET

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HIDING PLACE. THE DOCUMENTS, DELPEY HAS SAID, INCLUDE
CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN BOKASSA AND GISCARD.

THE APPARENTLY FRIGHTENED, UNNAMED SWISS, HAS BEEN RE-
FUSING SINCE HE GOT THE THREAT TO RETURN THE DOCUMENTS
FOR INCLUSION IN DELPEY'S FORTHCOMING BOOK. THE RECI-
PIENT OF THE THREAT TOOK IT SERIOUSLY BECAUSE, DELPEY'S

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FRIENDS SAY, ONLY AN ORGANIZATION SUCCESS AN INTELLIGENCE
SERVICE WITH SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT TO TRACE TELEPHONE
CALLS AND THE LIKE COULD HAVE IDENTIFIED HIM AND FOUND
HIS ADDRESS. END QUOTE.

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